

## **FOREST SCHOOL EDUCATIONAL RESOURCE HUB**

Whether you prefer to listen, read, watch, or scan through articles in order to learn, there are a variety of different platforms linked here to better understand the Forest Schooling movement at large. A big thank you to 2023.2024 Lead Teacher Kylie Gilbert for compiling the following resources!

### **Articles:**

***Understanding the Benefits of Forest & Outdoor Preschool.*** Within this article are links to studies explaining various benefits of this style of education.

<https://www.paperpinecone.com/blog/understanding-benefits-forest-outdoor-preschool#:~:text=Improved%20communication%2C%20concentration%2C%20motivation%2C,while%20increasing%20curiosity%20and%20imagination.>

**Risk and Its Importance in Forest School Programmes for Learning and Development.**

(2017). [Blog] *GET CHILDREN OUTDOORS*. Available at:

<http://getchildrenoutdoors.com/risk-forest-schools-learning-and-development/>

Natural Start Alliance. 2020. ***Nature Preschools And Kindergartens At Record Numbers In The U.S.*** [online] Available at:

<https://naturalstart.org/bright-ideas/nature-preschools-and-kindergartens-record-numbers-us>

Walker, T., 2016. **Kindergarten Naturally: Pine needles and crackling fires replace whiteboards and desks in Finland's forest classrooms.** *The Atlantic*, [online] Available at:

<https://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2016/09/kindergarten-naturally/500138/>

[Accessed 27 August 2020].

Ward, L. (2019). ***The forest school revolution: leaves, logs and life skills.*** [online] The Guardian. Available at:

<https://www.theguardian.com/teacher-network/2015/apr/21/outdoor-learning-forest-school-revolution>

Peterson, A. (2013). ***A Forest Preschool for the Bay Area: A pilot study for a new nature-based curriculum.*** Masters. Dominican University of California. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED542154>

### **Videos:**

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kj\\_ms4mmMM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kj_ms4mmMM) (6 mins)

<https://video.wtcitv.org/video/natures-classroom-o6tvda/> (9 mins)

REI Presents: [In Our Nature – Ep 3, Are Forest Preschools the Way of our Future?](#)

### **Books:**

*Last Child in the Woods* by Richard Louve

*Nature Preschools and Forest Kindergartens: The Handbook for Outdoor Learning* by David Sobel

*Coyote's Pocket Guide to Connecting Kids with Nature* by Ellen Haas & Lexie Bakewell

*Preschool Beyond Walls: Blending Early Childhood Education and Nature-Based Learning* by Rachel Larimore

### **Read: Fundamentals of Forest Schooling:**

Forest School focuses on **Play-based, Child-Led, Nature-Immersion**. We operate using an *Emergent Curriculum* and allow nature and the children's interest to lead our learning experience. This style of discovery fosters curiosity and inspiration for learning. Risk is considered a foundational pillar of our educational philosophy in Forest Schooling and imperative for the healthy developmental process. Forest Schooling removes resistance around learning. According to [The Forest School Association](#), "It is unlike curriculum-driven education, the needs of the learner are the driving force behind our ethos. It is not about cramming knowledge into a learner but about inspiring the uptake of knowledge at the right moment, so it is in context for that learner and builds self-belief, self-guided learning and development and self-regulation. You are correct in thinking this sounds like a magical balancing act, because it is, and so forest school is run by leaders who are qualified to maintain this balance. Learner-centered processes need to be flexible to ensure we can help our learners grow. So, Forest School leaders are trained to be reflective of their own practices and the needs of their learners." – [The Forest School Association](#)

"Forest School works brilliantly with learners who are anxious or have low self-esteem and can help others find their voice. It creates a positive road to mental well-being, through understanding problems and working them through to solutions. This resilience is so important, especially as the number of child suicides has increased and the number of mental health problems are sky-rocketing. Learners develop how to create social connections at Forest School and so learners become more independent, creative, social and healthy. Whilst observing all of the benefits of fun play and the outdoors."- [The Forest School Association](#)

**Risk and Forest School:** Risk is considered a foundational pillar of our educational philosophy in Forest School and imperative for a healthy developmental process.

The Forest School Association in the UK explains it like this: "Forest School should take place over 24 weeks or two semesters, ideally at least 2 seasons. This helps learners really maximize their experience, learn new skills and allows learners to overcome challenges, build self-regulation and self-reflection skills and to have time to work through real-world problems

and apply learned experiences, skills and solutions to new situations and environments. Forest School believes that risk and vulnerability are key to developmental change and seeks to balance the risk and benefit for each learner and each activity. Overcoming challenges or risks helps build resilience and confidence, especially when risk and challenge is explored through play. At Forest School we understand that risk goes far beyond those physical hazards and encourage learners to meet more subtle and complex risks during the sessions, including social risks and emotional risks. There is risk in everything we do, and each learner will face that risk differently. Forest School supports this, after all, life is risky stuff.” -[The Forest School Association](#)

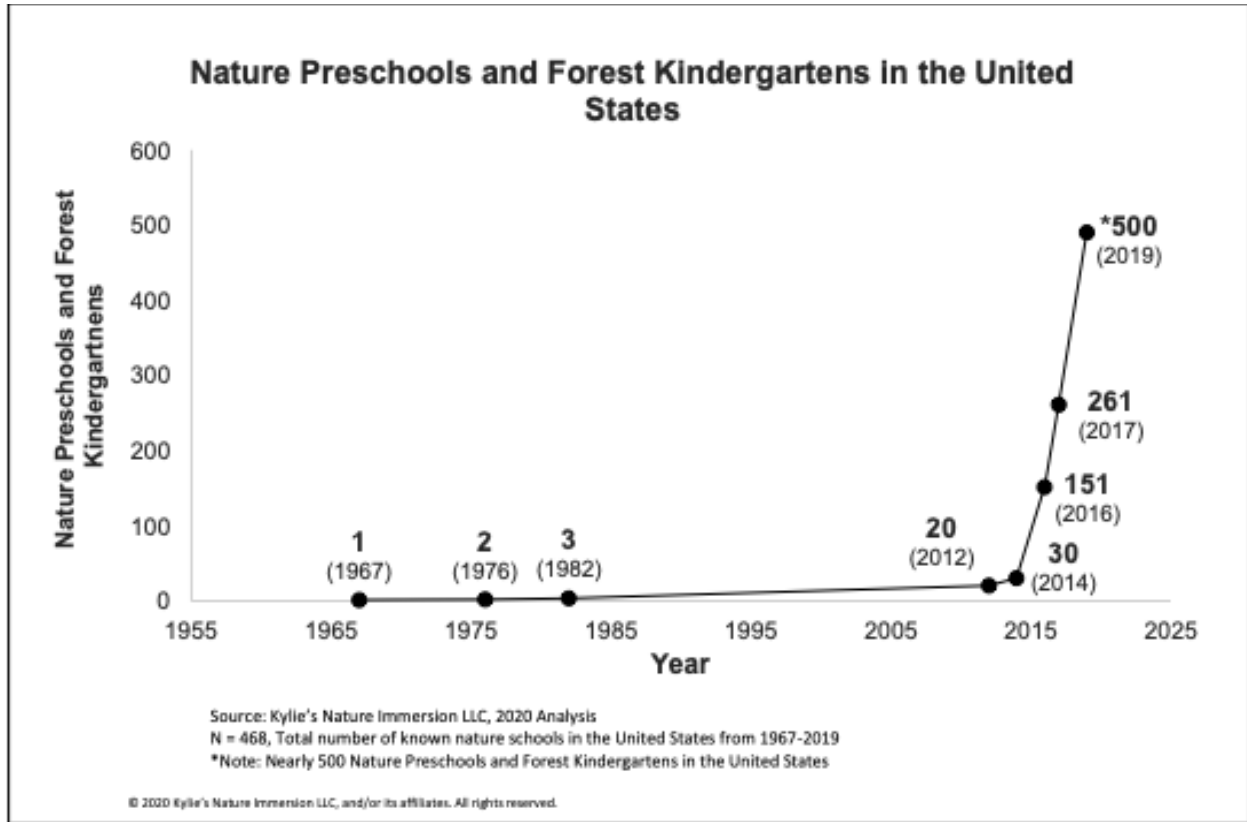
### **Benefits of Forest Schooling:**

Research and case studies have shown that Forest School works! Children attending forest school have a better handle on their emotions, they are more able to problem-solve, their vocabulary and communication skills increase more rapidly with forest school, and reading, writing and math all show significant increases when compared peer-to-peer. With better communication and understanding, learners' unwanted behaviors decrease in severity and frequency and life can become a much more pleasant place for them to be. ” – The Forest School Association [www.forestschoolassociation.org](http://www.forestschoolassociation.org)

Through this style of unfiltered play we make room physical, emotional, social, spiritual, and intellectual development to take place. Some benefits may include:

- Improvements in social skills
- Improved problem-solving skills
- Improved focus
- Improved creativity
- Improved cognitive abilities
- Improved eyesight
- Improved critical thinking skills
- Improved confidence
- So many more to still add!

**Visual Data on the Growth of Forest Schools in the U.S** (dated: last updated on 10/2020; more growth to be calculated)



2023/2024 Lead Teacher Kylie Gilbert designed Figure 2 above using data derived from the NAAEE 2017 Survey, the Children at Play Network, Michigan State University, and the Natural Start Alliance.

In 2012 there were 24 nature preschools (Larimore, 2016). In 2017 there were at least 261 nature preschools and forest kindergartens (Nature Preschools and Kindergartens at Record Numbers in the U.S., 2020). From 2012 to 2017 the total number of nature based preschools and forest kindergartens grew by at least 1205% (Larimore, 2016), (NAAEE Survey, 2017). As of October 2020, this is the most up-to-date graph available regarding the number of Nature-Based Preschools and Forest Kindergartens in the United States. (Larimore, 2016), (Nature Preschools and Kindergartens at Record Numbers in the U.S., 2020), (NAAEE SURVEY 2017), (Forest Schools and Nature Preschools, 2020).

As you can see there has been a great increase in the number of Nature Preschools and Forest Kindergartens. Since March of 2020 and the emergence of Covid 19, there's been a noticeable rise in the interest of outdoor education and alternatives to the traditional classroom model.